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**MANHATTAN U.S. ATTORNEY CHARGES 18 DEFENDANTS BASED ON
UNDERCOVER OPERATION TARGETING COLOMBIAN
BLACK MARKET PESO EXCHANGE**

*In Culmination of DEA Operation "Circling Vultures," Six
Defendants Arrested in Colombia; Six Defendants Extradited From
Colombia and Panama*

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and JOHN G. McCABE, JR., the Acting Special Agent-in-Charge of the New Jersey Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), announced charges against 18 defendants, in seven separate cases, for their alleged participation in an international money laundering conspiracy. The charges against these 18 defendants are the result of an extensive undercover DEA investigation into the Colombian Black Market Peso Exchange ("BMPE"), a means of laundering narcotics proceeds generated in the United States and ultimately returning them to Colombia.

In connection with the charges described in the thirteen charging instruments: one defendant was arrested yesterday; six defendants have been arrested in Colombia on June 24, and June 25, 2010; two defendants were extradited from Colombia on June 26, 2010; four defendants were previously extradited from Colombia and Panama; four defendants were previously arrested in New Jersey and Florida; and one defendant remains at large.

As alleged in the Indictments, Superseding Indictments, and criminal Complaints previously filed in connection with the investigation, and other documents filed in Manhattan federal court:

The BMPE is a means of laundering narcotics proceeds and transmitting the proceeds to the owners of the proceeds in countries of origin for narcotics such as Colombia. Through the BMPE, individuals serving in specialized roles, often called "peso brokers," "buy" the bulk U.S. dollar proceeds from the owners of the narcotics in Colombia. They then arrange to deliver the proceeds to co-conspirators in the United States, including corrupt businesses that send the proceeds to the peso brokers by engaging in apparently legitimate business banking transactions, by purchasing products that are then shipped to countries of origin for narcotics at the peso brokers' direction, or through other means. Once the currency or products arrive at their destination, they are sold to people who want to buy dollars or products for local currency (e.g., Colombian pesos) in unreported transactions at favorable exchange rates.

DEA undercover agents ("UCs") were introduced to numerous alleged peso brokers over the course of the investigation by a cooperating witness ("CW") who had laundered money through the BMPE. Over the next several months, UCs and others working in support of the operation engaged in multiple conversations, meetings, and monitored money laundering transactions in the United States, Panama, and Guatemala, among other locations, in which alleged narcotics proceeds were delivered or wire transferred to the UCs by targets of the investigation for laundering via the BMPE.

The Cases

The seven separate cases announced today are described in greater detail below. According to the charging instruments and other documents filed in Manhattan federal court:

U.S. v. JADER GOMEZ, et al.(09 Cr. 484)

JADER GOMEZ allegedly engaged in several meetings with the UCs discussing money laundering activities. For example, at a meeting that occurred in the New York area in February 2009, JADER GOMEZ allegedly indicated that he was negotiating a contract to move \$200 million in bulk U.S. currency from Guatemala into Panama, and he requested the UCs' assistance with moving the bulk currency by plane. In addition, on multiple other occasions in 2008 and 2009, JADER GOMEZ and his co-conspirators, LUIS ALEXANDER GOMEZ-OCAMPO, a/k/a "Alex Gomez," allegedly negotiated money laundering transactions, including wire transfers of tens of thousands of dollars from bank accounts in Hungary to accounts in the United

States that were controlled by the DEA, and multiple bulk cash pickups of \$200,000 or greater. The cash was allegedly laundered through the BMPE in monitored transactions engaged in at the instructions of JADER GOMEZ and his associates.

JADER GOMEZ, 37, was extradited from Colombia on June 21, 2010. GOMEZ-OCAMPO, 33, and WILLIAM GOMEZ, 28, were extradited on June 26, 2010, from Colombia and were arraigned in Manhattan federal court yesterday. The case has been assigned to United States District Judge SHIRA A. SCHEINDLIN.

U.S. v. MARLON SANCHEZ, et al. (09 Cr. 608)

U.S. v. ANTONIO BALBIN, et al. (09 Cr. 609)

U.S. v. OLGA LUCIA CELIS, et al. (09 Cr. 610)

U.S. v. HERNANDO RUIZ-PULIDO (09 Cr. 930)

Seven defendants -- MARLON SANCHEZ, JUAN FERNANDO RIASCOS, ANTONIO BALBIN, SIMON ACOSTA, OLGA LUCIA CELIS, RUBIN DARIO DAVILA, a/k/a "Jose Luis," and HERNANDO RUIZ-PULIDO, a/k/a "Karlos Sanchez" -- are charged in four separate Indictments with money laundering conspiracy.

SANCHEZ and RIASCOS are charged in an Indictment with conspiring together to launder narcotics proceeds in connection with, among other things, an alleged laundering transaction that occurred in New York on January 9, 2009. BALBIN and ACOSTA are charged in a separate Indictment with conspiring to launder narcotics proceeds in connection with, among other things, an on February 12, 2009. CELIS and DAVILA are charged in a third Indictment with conspiring to launder narcotics proceeds in connection with, among other things, an alleged money laundering transaction that occurred in New York on March 11, 2009. RUIZ-PULIDO is charged in a fourth Indictment with conspiring to launder narcotics proceeds in connection with, among other things, the alleged wire transfer of funds through the Southern District of New York on or about February 12, 2009.

RIASCOS, 26, BALBIN, 31, ACOSTA, 30, CELIS, 37, DAVILA, 35, and RUIZ-PULIDO, 52, were arrested in Colombia on June 25, 2010. MARLON SANCHEZ, 36, remains at large.

U.S. v. JORGE HERNANDO YEPES-MORALES (09 Mag. 2582)

JORGE HERNANDO YEPES-MORALES participated in a money laundering conspiracy with others by allegedly delivering a bag containing \$139,980 in narcotics proceeds to UCs on behalf of a Colombian peso broker on February 11, 2009. YEPES-MORALES, 41,

of Norwalk, Connecticut, was arrested yesterday morning and presented in Magistrate court yesterday.

U.S. v. PAOLO GOMEZ, et al. (09 Cr. 611)

PAOLO GOMEZ and OMAR VASQUEZ allegedly engaged in multiple meetings with UCs in Panama and Guatemala concerning large-scale money laundering transactions. These transactions included several completed bulk cash pickups totaling almost \$2 million in the New York area, Guatemala, and elsewhere, as well as an attempted delivery of approximately \$150,000 in narcotics proceeds on behalf of the conspiracy by JAIRO HERNAN TORRES in New York on or about June 4, 2009. PAOLO GOMEZ and OMAR VASQUEZ also allegedly brokered \$1.5 million in bulk cash pickups of narcotics proceeds in Guatemala by UCs, \$1 million of which was seized by DEA agents and Panamanian authorities.

PAOLO GOMEZ, 30, and OMAR VASQUEZ, 36, were arrested in Panama and extradited to the Southern District of New York on April 22, 2010. TORRES, 39, was arrested in Miami, Florida, on January 9, 2010. The case is pending before United States District Judge MIRIAM GOLDMAN CEDARBAUM.

U.S. v. MAHMOUD TOUKKO ADNAN (09 Cr. 931)

MAHMOUD ADNAN allegedly stated at a meeting in Panama with a UC that he was capable of moving large quantities of money from Lebanon to Colombia. ADNAN later agreed to help launder a portion of narcotics proceeds that UCs had obtained in the United States by arranging for the proceeds to be wire transferred to accounts in Hong Kong and Panama, and then later paid in Colombian pesos to a co-conspirator in Colombia.

ADNAN, 45, was arrested in Panama and extradited to the Southern District of New York on April 22, 2010. His case is pending before United States District Judge VICTOR MARRERO.

U.S. v. ORLANDO GONZALEZ, et al. (10 Cr. 141)

The Government obtained court authorization to wiretap GONZALEZ's cellphone in connection with its investigation into the BMPE. Agents intercepted numerous calls in which GONZALEZ and MARK ARTEGA allegedly discussed engaging in money laundering transactions, and in which GONZALEZ was allegedly taking direction from a peso broker located in Venezuela. Agents seized \$65,000 in bulk cash from ARTEGA as he and GONZALEZ allegedly engaged in a laundering transaction with a co-conspirator.

GONZALEZ, 48, and ARTEGA, 33, both of West New York, New Jersey, were arrested on February 9, 2010. Their case is pending before United States District Judge KIMBA M. WOOD.

U.S. v. MIGUEL ANGEL ROSARIO (09 Cr. 1139)

MIGUEL ANGEL ROSARIO allegedly participated in a laundering conspiracy with others by allegedly delivering a bag containing \$200,000 in narcotics proceeds to UCs on behalf of a Colombian peso broker on July 31, 2009. ROSARIO later attempted to negotiate further money laundering or narcotics trafficking work with a UC. ROSARIO also was charged with illegally reentering the United States after allegedly having been deported following a conviction on federal narcotics trafficking charges in 1992.

ROSARIO, 55, of Bronx, New York, was arrested in New Jersey on November 10, 2009. His case is pending before United States District Judge NAOMI REICE BUCHWALD.

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Each of the 18 defendants are charged with one count of participating in a money laundering conspiracy, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. ROSARIO is also charged with illegal reentry, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA stated: "These defendants allegedly laundered millions of narco dollars for drug-traffickers around the world. The numerous arrests and extraditions in this case demonstrate our hardline approach to the corrosive effect of the black market peso exchange on the U.S. banking system. Our Office will continue to work with our partners at DEA to pursue those who sustain the illegal drug trade."

DEA Acting Special Agent-in-Charge for the New Jersey Division JOHN G. McCABE, JR., stated: "The arrests and extraditions of Jader Gomez and his organizational members from Colombia sends a strong message that if you violate the federal narcotic laws in New Jersey, we will use all resources available until you are apprehended and prosecuted. The investigation is a direct result of the collective law enforcement efforts here in New Jersey and complimented by our DEA foreign Offices and counterparts in Cartagena, Colombia and Panama, notably the Colombian National Police and Panama National Police."

Mr. BHARARA praised the investigative work of the DEA New Jersey Field Office, the DEA's Attachés in Panama and Colombia, the DEA's Special Operations Division, the DEA's High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program, the DEA's Cartagena, Colombia, Resident Office, the DEA's Panama City, Bogota, Vienna, Guatemala City, San Jose (Costa Rica), and Hong Kong Country Offices, and the Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs. Mr. BHARARA also thanked the Colombian Department of Administrative Security, the Colombia Attorney General's Office, the Panamanian National Police, Guatemalan, Costa Rican, Hungarian National Police, and the Budapest Police Department. Mr. BHARARA added that the investigation is ongoing.

Assistant United States Attorneys HOWARD S. MASTER, PETER M. SKINNER, RYAN POSCABLO, and JANIS ECHENBERG are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Complaint, Indictments, and Superseding Indictments are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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